

Disbursing Companies are Needed

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Disbursing Companies are Needed

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Introduction

Disbursing within the Marine Corps is not broken. Marines get paid and their travel expenses are reimbursed. However, this success does not mean there is not a better way. The organization of disbursing operations in the Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs) must be changed to enhance professional development, streamline operations, and sustain an environment of process efficiency and improvement.

A Disbursing Company will improve command opportunities and experience for financial managers, combine the command and execution of their functions, and set the table for eventual changes in the field. This new umbrella organization must be created to maintain high quality financial management for the operating forces. And it is attainable.

Background Information

Marine Corps disbursing is organized differently at each Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). Disbursers at I MEF are assigned to 1st Force Service Support Group (FSSG) directly or via temporary additional duty (TAD) orders from local major commands.¹ 1st FSSG Disbursers work at a combined I MEF/Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton Disbursing Office. The Marines are

¹ Captain Lisa M. Doring, Assistant Disbursing Officer, 1st Force Service Support Group, Telephone interview, 12 January 2004.

all assigned to Service Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion (HQSVC Bn), 1st FSSG.²

In II MEF and III MEF financial management Marines are assigned to work at separate Marine Corps Base and Marine Expeditionary Force disbursing offices.^{3 4} Disbursers at II Marine Expeditionary Force will begin working at a consolidated Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune office beginning in Fiscal Year 2005. At that time all Disbursers would be assigned to Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Support Battalion.

It is Attainable

Re-organizing under the umbrella of one Disbursing Company at each FSSG is attainable. Disbursing is already large enough to form a company. There would be no need to re-configure systems, change processes, or alter office spaces. Implementation can be done once the MEF and MSEs supported accept the plan and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service approves the change.

Personnel at each MEF are already company-sized. There are 118 Disbursing Marines assigned (either directly or via TAD orders) to Service Company, HQSVC Bn, 1st FSSG.⁵ Similarly,

² 1st Force Service Support Group Disbursing Office, *Standard Operational Procedures*, 2003 (Camp Pendleton, Calif), 11-12.

³ II Marine Expeditionary Force Disbursing Office, *Standard Operational Procedures*, 2004 (Camp Lejeune, N.C.), 5-8.

⁴ III Marine Expeditionary Force Disbursing Office, *Standard Operational Procedures*, 2003 (Camp Butler, Okinawa, Japan), 9-13.

⁵ Doring, 12 Jan 2004.

there will be 121 Marines assigned to the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune Disbursing Office once consolidation is complete in fiscal year 2005.⁶ By Contrast MP Co, H&S Bn, 1st FSSG has 147 Marines.⁷ Service Company will still include 267 Marines if Disbursing Marines are removed.⁸

Disbursing Marines at each MEF are already organized into platoon-sized units. 1st FSSG contains five large sections (Military Pay, Military Travel, Separations and Customer Service, Fiscal, and a section in direct support of all FSSG units) and several smaller sections of important functions (operations, systems, and internal control).⁹ The current arrangement at 1st FSSG can easily be adapted into the Disbursing Company model (see sample organizational charts on page 11).

The III MEF Disbursing Office is organized into five main sections (fiscal, travel, operations, military pay and internal controls). The charts on page 11 are two examples of how a Disbursing Company could be organized. The platoons in the exhibits closely approximate the sections at 1st FSSG and III MEF offices.

Office spaces and systems will require virtually no change to accommodate the formation of a Disbursing Company. Current section configurations are already manned, staffed and equipped

⁶ Master Sergeant First M. Haddix, 3432 Monitor, Headquarters Marine Corps. Telephone Interview, 12 Jan 2004.

⁷ U.S. Marine Corps, *Organization of Marine Corps Forces*, 1998 (Washington, D.C.:GPO, 2001), 5-6.

⁸ *Organization of Marine Corps Forces*, 5-6.

⁹ 1st FSSG DO SOP, 11-12.

to carryout disbursing support. Any expansion, consolidation, or movement of office spaces or systems should be a result of changes in the functions a branch office performs and the units it supports, not the standing of the new company itself.

Perhaps the largest challenge to establishing a Disbursing Company would be gaining approval. The MEF, MSEs, Headquarters Marine Corps Division of Financial Management and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) must accept the plan. It must be emphasized that the career enhancement for the field improves the Marine Corps as a whole. The new unit would establish a hierarchy from which to enact future consolidations of financial management function, process improvement, and systems improvement.

Change Now Benefits the Occupational Field and the Marine Corps

Change now is not only a win-win for the financial management field. It also benefits the Marine Corps as well. Establishing a Disbursing Company would lead to improvement in career progression and opportunities for financial management Marines.

There is an under-representation of enlisted disbursing Marines in senior enlisted leadership billets. "The ratio of selection to Master Sergeant versus selection to First Sergeant is 15 to 1 for MOS 3432 during the last five fiscal year selection boards," said Master Sergeant First M. Haddix, 3432

Monitor.¹⁰ This is a strong indication that the selection boards are not recognizing the dual leadership and technical role that senior enlisted disbursers play. The creation of platoon sergeant and company gunnery sergeant billets will make disbursers more competitive for selection to 1st Sergeant. The playing field will be leveled once disbursers have the billet recognition that their peers in motor transportation and supply have.

Efficiency by Combining Command and Control of Disbursing

A Disbursing Company will provide synergy by combining the leadership of financial management Marines and the functional practice of their trade. Officers and noncommissioned officers can finally gain billet identifiable leadership experience without having to leave disbursing or lose in-MOS credibility time. A Disbursing Company also allows for financial management to best control their fulfillment of internal operations with the augmentation in support of Battalion and Group requirements.

It is important, yet often difficult, to have a quality balance of command time and MOS-credibility. Command time and billets are a challenge to attain for financial managers. The formation of Disbursing Company creates identifiable billets that can be geared toward developing the best leaders and disbursers for the Marine Corps. No longer would a Marine's

¹⁰ Haddix, 12 Jan 2004

only option be to leave disbursing in order to get a challenging leadership billet.

Disbursing Marines currently support their parent commands requirements for personnel support without control over the process. This process is akin to an infantry company that always divides and task organizes its forces to other units but is never the main effort. A Disbursing Company would fully participate in its higher command's defense. Financial management Marines could train to operate crew served machine guns.¹¹ This provides an identifiable unit to augment the 1st FSSG headquarters and use its organic MK-19, M2 and M-240G machine gun assets in defense of key support installations.¹²

A Disbursing Company Coincides with other Improvement Efforts

Creating a Disbursing Company is not just a change for change's sake. Rather, this proposed change coincides with current and future process improvement efforts. The DFAS has challenged financial managers in all services to recommend improvements to financial management.¹³ The Commandant of the Marine Corps, too, advocates Marines continuing to find ways to improved their processes and abilities.¹⁴

¹¹ Organization of Marine Corps Forces, 5.9 – 5.11.

¹² Organization of Marine Corps Forces, 5.9 – 5.11.

¹³ Department of Defense, *Financial Management Regulation Volume 1*, May 1993 (Washington, D.C.:GPO, 1993), 75.

¹⁴ General M. W. Hagee, U.S. Marine Corps, 33rd *Commandant of the Marine Corps Guidance*, 2003 (Washington, D.C.), 3-7.

Placing Marine Corps disbursing personnel into a functional company meets the intent of the Joint Financial Management Improvement Program (JFMIP).¹⁵ The JFMIP encourages the development and reporting of "initiatives undertaken by DOD components to improve financial management in the Department of Defense (DOD)."¹⁶ While a Disbursing Company will fulfill the programs criteria in the Marine Corps by improving productivity, it may also have applicability elsewhere in the DOD.

General Michael W. Hagee opens his 33d Commandant of the Marine Corps Planning Guidance by stating he wants all Marines to know his broad objectives and intent.¹⁷ The Corps' top Marine advocates "continual evolution and innovation in all that we do."¹⁸ The CMC Planning Guidance does not specifically mention financial management for improvement. However, the intent of the Commandant must be followed to ensure financial management remains responsive and flexible in its support of the operating forces.

Conclusion

Establishing a Disbursing Company at each MEF will enhance professional development, streamline operations, and create an environment of process efficiency and improvement. It is attainable and needs to be considered as an option for better

¹⁵ DODFMR Vol 1, 75

¹⁶ DODFMR Vol 1, 75

¹⁷ 33rd CMC Guidance, 3.

¹⁸ 33rd CMC Guidance, 6.

supporting Marine Air-Ground Task Forces of all sizes. This change will enhance financial managers and the Marine Corps as a whole.

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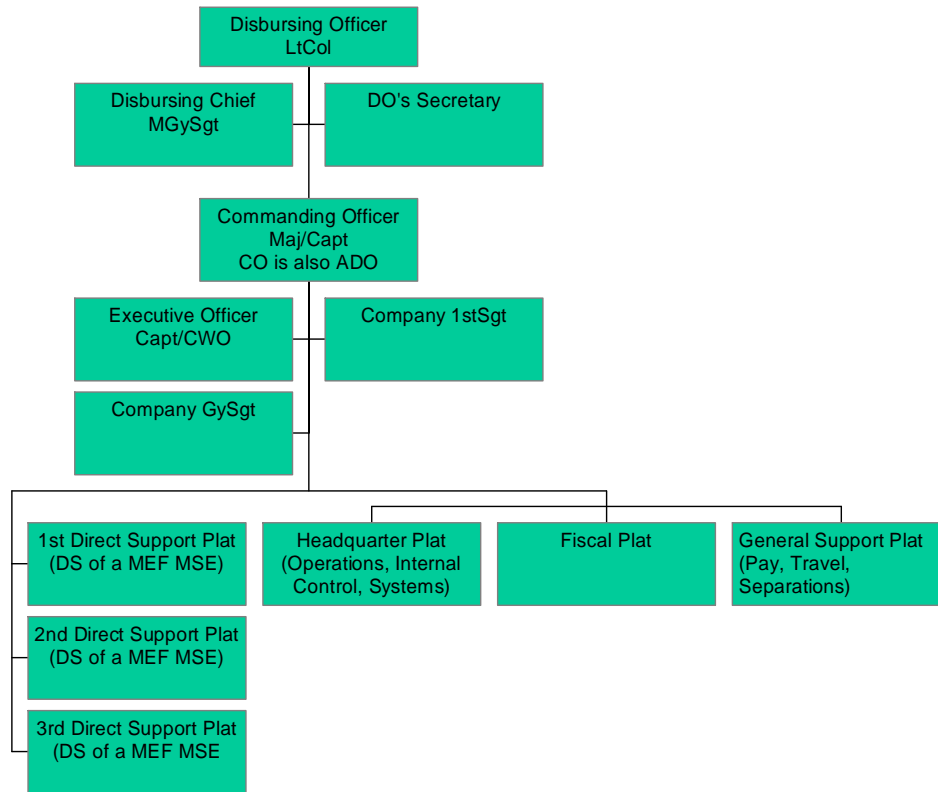
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Disbursing Company Organizational Chart
Sample One



Disbursing Company Organizational Chart
Sample Two

